



College Spotlight

Success Strategies from Michigan Community Colleges

Student Success

Talent Development

Community Vitality

Expanding Access Through Michigan Reconnect

Michigan Reconnect is a program designed to make community college affordable for Michigan residents who have not yet earned their college degrees, providing last-dollar, tuition-free access for in-district students and substantial tuition support for out-of-district students. In fall 2023, the Michigan Legislature temporarily expanded Michigan Reconnect to include students ages 21 to 24. To maximize the impact of this expansion, the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential invested in a variety of interventions across campus offices to enhance direct outreach to eligible students.

At Muskegon Community College (MCC), administrators seized this opportunity to implement **marketing** and **Student Connections outreach** strategies, driving enrollment growth and increasing student engagement.



Reconnect-Driven Institutional Redesign

- **Marketing expansion.** With Reconnect funds, MCC contracted with professional marketing companies to help them understand students' interests and how best to communicate with them. These partnerships saw the creation of two targeted digital campaigns: *Smile* and *Free for Me at MCC*. The *Smile* campaign targeted male students ages 21 to 24 with humorous messaging emphasizing the milestone of turning 21 and their eligibility for free tuition at Muskegon Community College through the Reconnect expansion. The *Free for Me at MCC* campaign highlighted how students might take advantage of available resources. The college also purchased Google ads and social media ads in static and [video format](#). In addition to digital campaigns, in the summer of 2024, MCC distributed t-shirts, postcards, and other branded items at three parades in Muskegon, Muskegon Heights, and Fremont. These efforts helped MCC connect directly with the community and spark broader interest in the Reconnect program.
- **Student Connections outreach campaign.** MCC engaged with [Student Connections](#), an organization that helps students overcome financial barriers to education, to conduct targeted outreach. In summer of 2024, Student Connections made approximately 500 calls over eight days to a list of potential Reconnect-eligible students that MCC administrators compiled who had previously applied or taken action with MCC in the past two years but had not enrolled. This proactive outreach aimed to inform students of their eligibility, address potential barriers, and facilitate students' enrollment with personalized assistance.

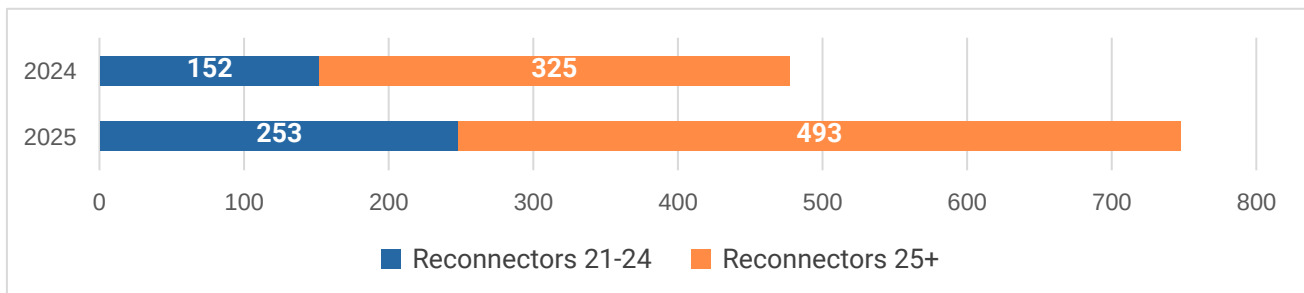


Outreach and Enrollment Success

Through the marketing and outreach interventions, MCC saw an increase in Reconnect applications and enrollment. Personalized outreach by Student Connections led to a notable boost in engagement in 2025, resulting in nearly 200 applications from student phone calls. As a result of the Smile marketing campaign, enrollment for male students specifically increased 12 percent from winter 2024 to 2025. Overall, Reconnect opportunities helped bring campus offices together to work more effectively, as admissions and marketing collaborated to launch targeted campaigns and coordinate outreach in response to the expansion. MCC learned to quickly pivot to new campaigns and keep potential applicants informed as new opportunities arose.

- Reconnect enrollment increased **66 percent for students ages 21 to 24**, with 253 students enrolled in winter of 2025.
- Reconnect enrollment increased **52 percent for students ages 25 and older**, with 493 students enrolled in winter of 2025.

Reconnect Enrollment, Winter 2024 and 2025



A Sustainable Model for Future Success

As the college sees fluctuations in enrollment for students recently graduating from high school, MCC is increasingly focusing on its adult learners. Adult learners often come with many barriers to education as they balance work and family needs. The college recognizes the main barrier for most adult students is financial. To address this need, the college braids multiple funding offerings through Reconnect and other program grants to provide the most assistance possible for Reconnect recipients. In addition, MCC offered AmeriCorps and Michigan College Access Network coaching for first generation college students, and used Reconnect coaches to conduct outreach to those students who qualified for support. In January 2025, MCC engaged two full-time student success navigators to provide enrollment and retention support using Reconnect grant funds. The college used lessons learned through its initial Reconnect digital campaigns to create a new *Bring It Out* campaign in 2025. To help with other student needs, the [Jayhawk Hub](#) offers a food pantry, bus passes, gas gift cards, loaner laptops, and community resources. MCC feels more confident that they are reaching students through an authentic understanding of student needs and interests and supporting their journey to degree attainment.

“Reconnect offered us a big way to talk to students about returning to college—to tell them don’t let financing be the reason you don’t come to school.” — Director of Admissions